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Coalition of Hindus of North America

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More than 100 diverse organizations and businesses write uncil urging them to vote “NO” on the propose caste

[Home](#) / More than 100 diverse organizations and businesses write to Seattle City Council urging them to vote “N
ordinance

More than 100 diverse organizations businesses urge seattle city council t "no" on the proposed caste ordinance

Note: Signatories will be updated periodically. To add your organization's or group's name as a signat
representatives only), please click [here](#) to fill out the form.

**The letter contains a diverse coalition of nearly 100 organizations, including Dalit and B
major Hindu and Jain temples, cultural and social organizations, as well as non-Hindu o**

Honorable Councilmembers,

We, the undersigned, who represent a broad spectrum of Hindu and South Asian organizat
cultural associations, **urge you to vote NO** on Councilwoman Kshama Sawant's proposed
alleged caste discrimination in Seattle.

We are shocked and saddened to see such a proposal, which is based on fallacies and unj
by hate groups such as Equality Labs. This ordinance peddles bigotry and singles out the
community by using racist, colonial tropes of “caste” and ensures that our community is s
scrutiny, thus denying our rights to freedom of religion and equal protection. Councilwoma
to present this as “right wing” pushback – we ask you to simply look at what Equality Labs
have said in public and ask you to judge if they can indeed be seen as an “objective” sourc
are included below.

The folks pushing this ordinance have called for an open dismantling of the Hindu religion the extremely popular festival of Holi by falsely claiming that the festival celebrates the bu caste" woman and where men advance violence against women, including throwing seme important to note that Ms. Sawant has a history of working with and mainstreaming such



Sharmin Hossain @sharminultraa · Jan 31

Absolutely, Brahmins have appropriated all their Gods from Dalit Adivasis. Brahmins have stolen the Buddha, the hand of Fatima & Islamic relics. Hinduism cannot be apart of progressive discourse dismantle Brahminism.



Sharmin Hossain @sharminultraa · Jan 31

Caste has informed every social, political and economic structure Diaspora. Arguing to salvage Hinduism is dominant caste rhetoric rooted in the Hindu scriptures. It is not a theological debate.



6



11



27



Holi is practiced, creating a turbulent and frightening environment gender based harassment attacks rise during this time. This incl of men throwing balloons filled with rocks, water, or *even semen* who are walking in the street. We cannot expect more from a fes heart is quite literally the burning of an Indigenous woman.



Equality Labs

@EqualityLabs

Here's how you can challenge casteism on #Holi 🌈 : Desist from celebrating it yourself and resist cultural attempts to saffron-wash its violent history. There are other ways to build community and practice tradition that don't begin with the immolation of a Bahunan femme.

8:25 PM · 06 Mar 20 · Twitter Web App

The ordinance is heavily dependent on **faulty data** supplied by hate groups such as Equality Labs (see above) and the Ambedkar King Study Circle. The survey has been challenged by several sources over the years,^[3] with the most recent being the reputed Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In a recent survey on Indian Americans, Carnegie called out the survey's flaws in Footnote 29, indicating (emphasis added):^[4]

This study relied on a nonrepresentative snowball sampling method to recruit respondents who did not disclose a caste identity were dropped from the data set. Thus, the sample does not fully represent the South Asian American population and could be biased towards those who have strong views about caste. While the existence of caste discrimination in the United States is incontrovertible, its precise extent and intensity in the United States can be contested.

By relying on data from such groups, the council is mainstreaming hate against the South Asian community and reneging its commitment to diversity and inclusion.

There is also no substantial evidence of any caste-based discrimination in Seattle. We the People would not want the city to spend valuable time and resources behind such a baseless ordinance and related lawsuits and loss of business opportunities from a vibrant South Asian community which has contributed significantly to the city's progress.

As proposed, the law singles out South Asians and projects them as a group that discriminates against any other and thus requires a special monitoring. This is inherently discriminatory and violates equal protection and due process guaranteed by our constitution and Washington State law.

We also wonder how much the council knows about the nuances and the extremely complex nature of "castes" in South Asia. For example, there are thousands of "castes" and social groupings in South Asia. Many vary based on the different states or provinces within each of the eight countries in South Asia. How will the Seattle City Council plan to adjudicate these complaints or determine someone's caste? A ban on caste discrimination will come up against strict guidelines set by the Supreme Court of India. Any such claims^[5] subjecting the city to costly litigation and legal imbroglio.

In fact, such an experiment is a stark reminder of the racist and colonial policies implemented to rule Indians and advance their inherent prejudice against the native "savage" population. The historical flaws in the colonizers' attempts to assign castes to Indians, Mr. Middleton, a superintendent of a census survey of the Punjab Province of India, pointed out the effects of such policies:

We pigeonholed every one (sic) by caste, and if we could not find a true caste for them with the name of a hereditary occupation. We deplored the caste system and its effect on economic problems, but we are largely responsible for the system we deplore ... Government for labels and pigeonholes has led to a crystallization of the caste system, which except aristocratic castes, was really very fluid under indigenous rule.

The ordinance also claims that "caste" is hereditary and sanctioned by law and religion. **There is no caste in the world, and certainly not in South Asia, which sanctions "caste" discrimination.** In a religion in South Asia that officially sanctions such discrimination. In fact, the very word "caste" comes from the Portuguese "casta" and has no precedent in any South Asian system.

Furthermore, the ordinance cites the Cisco lawsuit by California Department of Civil Rights. It should pause and consider how an allegation that has not even been proven after close to a year is counted as "evidence," not just against the individuals involved, but against the entire community. This assumption of guilty unless proven innocent contravenes our fundamental principles.

Similarly, the CSU policy cited as evidence/precedence has already resulted in a lawsuit by the university. Brown University, in enacting a similar rule, admitted that "existing laws are not designed to handle discrimination based on Caste." Brandeis University has not recorded a single case of caste discrimination in the three years since caste was added as a protected category on its campus.

The facts directly contradict the exaggerated claims that caste based discrimination is widespread and an urgent problem that must be addressed with this ordinance.

As Americans and people of South Asian origin, we strongly condemn all forms of discrimination, including caste-based discrimination, and firmly believe that there is no place for prejudice or mistreatment of anyone in our diverse and pluralistic society. Fortunately, our country's federal laws protect against caste discrimination under the existing categories of national origin and race, of which have been interpreted as inclusive of the various characteristics that might be associated with caste such as ancestry (lineage), birthplace, culture, ethnicity, or language.

We therefore strongly urge you to vote NO and not adopt policies that would unfairly and unjustly target people of South Asian descent or origin, subject them to special scrutiny, leave them vulnerable to bullying in schools, and deprive them of their fundamental civil rights in the workplace or elsewhere.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

1. All World Gayatri Pariwar
2. Ambaji USA Shree Shakti Mandir
3. Ambedkar-Phule Network of American Dalits and Bahujans
4. Amivex Inc
5. Annapoorna USA Foundation
6. Anup Inc
7. Ariven Community

8. Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America, Georgia
9. Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America, Michigan
10. AS Health Insurance
11. Ashwin College of Ayurveda
12. Be SANSKRITI Legacy
13. Behind Every Temple
14. Bellevue Hindu temple and cultural center
15. Bhavaanee Maa Mandir
16. Carmel Interfaith Alliance
17. Central Jersey Hindu Association
18. Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA)
19. Consciousness for Humantiy
20. Dakshin Vrindavan USA
21. Dalit Bahujan Solidarity Network
22. Dayton Hindu Temple
23. Durga Temple
24. Durga Temple in New Jersey
25. Durga Temple of VA
26. Federation of Hindu Mandirs
27. Federation of Indian Associations of WA
28. Federation of indo-american association
29. Frisco Medical Associates
30. Global Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora

31. Global One LT Inc.
32. GLOBAL ORGANIZATION OF PEOPLE OF INDIAN ORIGIN OC
33. Greater Atlanta Vedic Temple Society Inc.
34. Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple
35. Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay
36. HindiUSA
37. Hindu American Society of Central NJ
38. Hindu American Society of Central NJ
39. Hindu Americans of San Diego
40. Hindu Cultural Center of Placer County
41. Hindu Decoloniality
42. Hindu Speakers Bureau
43. Hindu Temple of Bloomington
44. Hindu Temple of Central Arkansas
45. Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago
46. Hindu temple of the desert
47. Hindu University of America
48. HinduAction KaramVeers
49. HinduDvesha
50. Hindupedia
51. IAFF
52. INDIA American forum
53. India Awareness Foundation

54. InterfaithShaadi
55. ISKCON of Silicon Valley
56. ISKCON of WA
57. Jain Society of Greater Cleveland
58. Jaya Hanuman Temple and Cultural Center
59. Jeeyer Education Trust
60. KarmaKonnnect
61. Kerala Hindus of North America
62. Kerala Hindus of Northern California
63. Mahaa Lakshmi Mandir
64. Mana Samskriti
65. Mandir
66. MIP LLC
67. My Temple
68. New England Indian Christians fellowship
69. NRI JAC
70. Organization Of Hindu Malayalees
71. Osscar
72. RICHA GRAPHICS
73. River Comics
74. S-square D-square LLC
75. Sai Temple of Austin
76. Sarascare Foundation USA

77. Shiva Vishnu Temple of Greater Cleveland
78. Shree Sai Parivar
79. Shri Darshan
80. Shri Navagraha Devasthanam of NA, Inc
81. Shri Sanatan Mandir
82. Shri Surya Narayan Mandir
83. Siddhi Vinayaka Cultural Center Inc
84. SIMRA
85. Srimanirama educational and cultural Foundation
86. Sukadhwani
87. Tamil Hindu
88. The Hindu Temple of Atlanta, Inc
89. The Saraswati Sangam Project
90. United American Hindu Leadership Council Inc
91. United States Hindu Alliance
92. Uttar Pradesh Mandal of America
93. Uttarpur Ganesha Mandali
94. Vaanprasth Punarutthan Yagya
95. Vaishnav Samaj of Southern California
96. Vedic Cultural Center
97. Vedic Education and Devotional Academy
98. Vedic Heritage Inc
99. VETRA INC

100. Vishwa Hindu Parishad

101. Washington Helping Hands

102. Washington State India Trade Relations Action Committee

103. Whitestone Diamonds Inc

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[3] <https://medium.com/@rachelgotham5/equality-labs-caste-report-a-rebuttal-to-a-british-replayed-1676068ee2cf>

About CoHNA

CoHNA (pronounced: "Kohnaa"), is a grassroots advocacy group representing the Hindu community of North America.

The coalition seeks to protect the collective interests of the Hindu community by working on the issues faced by them and educating the public about Hindu heritage and tradition.

It is building a movement to empower Hindus whereby they can become meaningful contributors and active participants in their local communities on a wide range of issues.

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